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**GOVERNOR SCHWARZENEGGER PROCLAIMS MAY AS "DROWNING PREVENTION MONTH"**

Following simple safety tips could save a life this summer

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SACRAMENTO – Governor Schwarzenegger proclaimed May as "Drowning Prevention Month", the California Department of Developmental Services (DDS) announced today.

The governor's proclamation will kick-off a six-month effort by DDS and the Drowning Prevention Foundation to raise awareness of risks that can lead to childhood drownings and prevention measures.

Childhood drownings are the leading cause of injury-related deaths among children under age 5 in California. These accidents can occur in swimming pools, hot tubs and even five-gallon buckets. In addition to the high number of drowning deaths each year, near-drowning accidents often leave victims with permanent disabilities. Currently, 659 people with developmental disabilities receive services in California from DDS as a result of surviving near-drowning accidents. In 2004, 63 children under the age of five died as a result of these preventable accidents.

Steps to avoid drowning accidents include close and constant supervision of children at all times near water and of multiple layers of protection, including pool fencing, gates, automatic sliding door closers, pool alarms and automatic safety covers.

Other safety guidelines published by the Drowning Prevention Foundation include the following:

- Never leave a child alone near water while you answer the telephone or doorbell, to attend to another child or for household chores, even for a few seconds. At large gatherings designate an adult to watch children at play.
- Fence your pool on all four sides with a barrier that is at least five feet high. Move lawn chairs, tables and other potential climbing aids away from the fence to help keep out children. Any gate or door leading to the pool area should be self-closing and self-latching, opening outward, with the latch placed on the poolside and out of reach.
- Install panic alarms on all house doors and windows leading to the pool area, automatic sliding door closers and an automatic safety cover over the pool.
- Drain off water that accumulates on top of a pool cover. A child can drown in as little as two inches of water. Completely remove the cover before allowing children in the pool.

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- Keep reaching and throwing aids, such as poles and life preservers, on both sides of the pool. All non-swimmers should wear approved personal flotation devices (life vests) when they are near water and especially near rivers and streams.
- Swimming lessons do not ensure safety. About 25 percent of all young drowning victims have had swimming lessons. A child who falls into water unexpectedly may panic and forget his or her swimming skills. Adults who serve as caretakers for children who swim should know how to swim themselves, and also be certified to perform cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) in an emergency. Immediate CPR could prevent death or massive brain damage.

For more information, including copies of the Governor’s Proclamation and Drowning Prevention Tips, please go to www.dds.ca.gov/drowning

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